

2020 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

During the week I chanced upon an Article written for the 'New Zealand Tablet' by one of our premier poets, James K. Baxter, 53 years ago this December.

Baxter wrote: "When I first knelt down in a Catholic church, in half-darkness before the flickering tabernacle light, and allowed myself to sink silently into the great ocean of that Presence mysteriously contained in the consecrated Host, the change within me was as if I had crossed a boundary from one country to another. Behind me was narrowness, in front of me Infinity itself; behind me a light that resembled darkness, in front of me a darkness that was the Light of the World; behind me doubtful allegiances, in front of me that Man who is also God and Who demands the last atom of my love."

"In those days when I first became a Catholic I would go to St. Joseph's Cathedral with joy and expectation and stay as long as I could. Sometimes I would return at night when the church was locked and kneel on the concrete outside the door to join myself to the Beloved Presence who remained there in the darkness beside the all-night burning tabernacle lamp.

"Was this a form of religious insanity? No- it was my first experience of the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord."

"If we deny ourselves the experience of regular visits to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, it is ourselves that we are neglecting; for we are denying ourselves the tremendous peace and silence and joy of bathing and being refreshed by His Presence. As a piece of wood placed in front of a fire will first become dry and then finally burst into flame, so our hearts can be kindled with the divine Love by a constant association with that Sacramental Friend."

"Because He loves us, Jesus wishes to gather us into His arms; and through His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament He has provided a means by which this can readily occur. We simply go to Him; rest with Him; talk to Him and listen to His non-auditory communications. In profound silence we endure with Him the weight of the sins of the world; all the time rejoicing with Him in the triumph of His Holy Will." Thank-you James for those inspiring words.

On that day as Jesus climbed Mt. Tabor accompanied by Peter, James and John, there would have been tension between them. Jesus would have been

deeply troubled and so would have been the Apostles. A week or so earlier Jesus had preached to the crowds on the Eucharist; claiming “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you will have no life in you.” He had been rejected as a madman. The crowds up and left for home. He had said to the Apostles: “Will you leave me too?” The apostles certainly did not understand Jesus’ teaching on the Eucharist but Peter, to his credit, had said, “No, Master, we believe that You have the words of eternal life.”

But they then had a bitter argument with Him over His proposal to go to Jerusalem. So much so that He had to say to Peter, “Get behind me Satan.”

On Mt. Tabor Jesus knelt in prayer. We cannot begin to imagine what happened within Jesus during this time. John would later say, “We saw His glory.” Matthew wrote: “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. A bright cloud passed over the sun casting them into shadow and from the cloud a voice was heard- the voice of the Father saying: ‘This is My Son, the Beloved; He enjoys My favour. Listen to Him.’ ”

From Mt. Tabor Jesus would journey to Jerusalem. A few weeks later He would climb another Mountain- Mt. Calvary. Once again a cloud passed over the sun; but this time it was not a bright cloud. It was a dark cloud and Jesus was heard to cry out, “My God, my God, why have You abandoned Me?”

But Jesus never lost Faith. The memory of that time of special intimacy on Mt. Tabor would have sustained Him.

We are able to climb Mt. Tabor every time we enter the Church, genuflect and still ourselves before the Blessed Sacrament. As James K. Baxter told us- simply go to Him; rest with Him; talk to Him and listen to Him. He waits for us in the Blessed Sacrament with endless patience.

Through His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus has provided a means whereby we can be as close to Jesus as Jesus was to the Father on that day at Mt. Tabor.

In the words of James K. Baxter, “What kind of love is it that does not seek out the One who is loved? Can we claim to love Him truly if we do not go to meet Him in the place where He waits for us with endless patience?” The Lover will always wish to be close to the Beloved. And so throughout the day we take those opportunities we have to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament and be close to our Beloved Saviour, our Dearest and Best Friend.

